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19 June 1961

HUNGARIANS DEBATE ECONOMIC RAYON RESEARCH PROBLEM

by Gyorgy Enyedi

- Hungary -

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19990714 139

FOREWORD

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WASHINGTON, D. C. 20340-5000

JPRS: 4706

CSO: 1849-S

### HUNGARIANS DEBATE ECONOMIC RAYON RESEARCH PROBLEM

Following is the translation of an article by Gyorgy Enyedi in Foldrajzi Ertesito (Geographical Bulletin), Vol X, No 1, Budapest, 1961, pages 117-121.

The Geographic Committee and the Geological Sciences Group of the Hungarian Scientific Academy held a symposium on 17 June 1960 at the Karl Marx University of Economics on the main problems of rayon research. Several factors made this meeting particularly timely. One of them was that a book (The Geography of Hungary, co-published with the Geographic Institute of the Soviet Scientific Academy) will appear soon, and an agreement had to be reached on the territorial division of Hungary (as far as economic geography was concerned). Another factor was that this division and the subsequent planning for the created districts became urgent for national economic reasons. Fulfillment of this demand falls on the economic geographers who have been urging this task to be done even before planning was started in Hungary. The importance of the problem is illustrated by the presence of economists, architects, and experts of the National Planning Bureau.

Professor Sandor Rado, Doctor of Geographic Sciences, opened the meeting. He emphasized that for the first time Hungarian geographers have a voice in the solution of a national problem. It is their duty to work actively on the problems presented. "In the last few years the economic development and mutual economic relations of the socialist countries have reached a degree where territorial as well as branch planning have become an important part of projected planning," said Prof Rado.

The first speech was given by Dr Gyula Bora, Assistant Professor. A summary of his speech is given below.

1) Hungarian geographers began to look into the problem of rayon research only after 1949. Soviet literature on the subject and the personal attention of Soviet geographers was of great help.

2 A) The First Rayon Conference of the HSA was held in 1952. The conference resolved that the rayon is the basic unit of geographical work distribution. Rayons are the basic area units of planning; their borders are assigned on the basis of geographical situation, industrial concentration, large city areas, etc.

B) After the conference a uniform economic-geographic methodology was prepared; however, it lacked methods for drawing borders.

C) The First Hungarian Geographic Congress (1955) resolved the following in connection with rayons:

a) The rayon, the basic unit of geographic work distribution, exists; hence, it must be searched for and not only assigned.  
b) Within a rayon, there is a further subdivision to sub-rayons, etc.

c) Rayon research and economic policy must be separated. The task of economic geography is to define the rayons. The economists can then incorporate them into territorial planning.

Not even the Congress could agree on the methods of determining rayon borders. This is the reason we haven't progressed in complex rayon defining, although there has been some progress in the research of branch rayons (especially in agricultural-geographical rayons).

The main problems are the following:

1) It is wrong to use "bordering from the top" only. Aside from the three industrial districts already existing, the rest of the country is a cluster of micro-rayons. These micro-rayons are now forming, and their planning can be enhanced by rayon research.

2) The rayon-organizing work of the planning can be effective only if the political and economical units coincide. Since our countries cannot be developed into economic units, a political reform of their borders must be carried out.

3) The relationship between branch and economic rayons is not yet clear. The branch rayon is not yet an economic rayon, but it can be the main factor in the economic rayon's development. The branch rayon lacks complexity, which is one of the main characteristics of economic rayons.

After Dr Bora's speech, Dr Amalia Kollarik, Dr Laszlo Koszegi, and Dr Gyorgy Enyedi (co-panelists); Dr Ferenc Koch, Dr Sandor Lang, Gyula Krajko, Dr Gyorgy Markos, Dr Janos Kolta, Jozsef Temesi, Dr Ferenc Boros, Ferenc Vidor, Gyula Miklos, and Csaba Kovacs asked to contribute. Their various views can be summed up as follows:

- 1) Suggestions for Hungary's economic-district division.
- 2) Theoretical and methodological questions of rayon research.
- 3) The relationship between rayon organization and planning.
- 4) Other questions.

1) Three suggestions were given for a hypothetical economic district division of Hungary. The first, given by Amalia Kollarik, is already known and was worked out by the Economy-Geography Department of the Karl Marx University of Economics. The theoretical basis for this division are: a) every district must be a nationally significant economic complex; b) it should be possible to raise the economy of every district to a complex; c) the districts should be self-sufficient in their main foodstuffs and in some industrial goods; d) there should be sufficient manpower for development within every district. Closed transportation systems and other elements regarded necessary in other countries are not considered necessary here. The proposed ten districts are: Central Industrial Area, Northern Industrial Area, Upper Tisza, Central Tisza, Southeast Plains, area between the Danube and the Tisza, Little Plains, Central Transdanubian Industrial Area, Southeast

Transdanubia, Southwest Transdanubia.

This plan was worked out and based on data collected in the period between 1952 and 1956. Changes occurring after this time, which was short but significant, were not incorporated. Hence, this division is no longer valid, according to the National Planning Bureau (represented by Laszlo Koszegi). Koszegi suggested a new rayon system. The new system endeavored to create large rayons, for only these have a possibility to develop into complexes. The centers of rayons must be cities with a large attraction sphere which will be able to weaken the overly central position of Budapest. Such cities can only be those that have over 100,000 inhabitants presently (and possibly Gyor). He suggested, therefore, six districts: the Gyor District (consisting of Gyor, Vas, and Zala Counties and parts of Komarom and Fejer Counties); the Pecs District (consisting of the rest of Transdanubia); the Szeged District (Bekes, Csongrad, Bacs-Kiskun Counties); the Debrecen District (Szabolcs, Hajdu, Szolnok Counties); the Miskolc District (Borsod, Heves Counties and part of Nograd and Szolnok Counties), and the Budapest District (the rest of the country).

The third rayon plan was given by Sandor Lang. He prepared the plan with respect to geographic, economic, and transportation considerations. His plan is close to that of Koszegi, but Lang suggested seven rayons. He wants to make the Balaton area an independent rayon.

These rayon plans were discussed. Large-rayon plans were supported by Ferenc Koch and Gyorgy Enyedi; however, Enyedi said that it is pointless to argue about specific rayon plans, for neither the planners nor the critics have enough reliable data to support their opinions. In those districts whose existence is obvious, there is no controversy; while the Plains (where there is no visible rayon structure) would be divided according to several and quite different schemes.

2) The relation between the branch and complex districts, the definition of complexity, the existence of rayons, the methods for planning rayons, a wider interpretation of economic life and the problem of "appointment of rayons from above" vs "building them from below" — these were the main theoretical and methodological problems that were discussed.

Three views crystallized in the discussion over the relation between branch and complex districts. One of them (which was part of Gyula Bora's speech) was that the branch district can be an important part of the rayon but is not a rayon, for it lacks another characteristic of the rayon, complexity. At the same time, complexity cannot be looked at rigidly, for it can be accepted as a tendency, as a developmental possibility. Some of our areas are only branch districts, but can be developed into complex districts in the future. This view was supported by Koch, Markos, and Koszegi. Another view was put forth by Krajko, who wants to recognize complexity as equivalent to specialization. Hence, he separated the branch district and the rayon. "Every economic district is complex as well as specialized. We must emphasize complexity as much as is being done in the Soviet Union or in any other socialist country. Complexity is the consequence of social structure. In capitalist countries the economic rayons are not at all complex. Due to the changed social

structure, in the socialist countries the complex character of the economic rayons can be seen," said Krájko.

According to the third view (Enyedi), the essence of the rayon is specialization. Complexity comes from specialization but is not a criteria for the rayon. In this way branch and economic rayons do not separate; the branch district remains the inner content of the rayon. This comes logically from the definition that rayon is the basic unit of geographic work division. And work division -- from the political economists' angle -- means specialization, a branching of production. From the angle of the geographic economists it means specialization of areas. Economic-political reasons make it sensible to develop an agricultural area industrially, but even without industrialization the area has a determined role in the country's economy; hence, it falls under the definition of a rayon. Enyedi protested that rayon researchers are apt to call industrial districts "rayons" even though they have no agriculture to speak of.

These three views all depend on the definition of complexity. Complexity was the most hotly debated subject at the meeting. The interpretation of complexity was less rigid than it generally was at the beginning of rayon research (Koszegi, Kovacs, Miklos). It is natural that in a narrower interpretation even a branch is complex (Kovacs), since it involves the cooperation of the various factories within the same industrial branch. Without such complexity, modern production is impossible. (This is why it is senseless to define as rayons every place where there is complexity -- Enyedi.) Prof Koch says that we tend to interpret the complexity narrowly because our rayons are actually equivalent to the Soviet meso-rayons, whose complexity is of lower degree than that of rayons. Gyula Krajko says that Hungarian rayons must be as complex as Soviet ones; complexity is a function of social structure and not of area size. Since a complexity of such degree cannot be found in the greater part of our country, we do not have economic rayons in those parts. The speakers agreed almost without exception that complexity must not be considered as autarchy. The exception was Amalia Kollarik's already-mentioned opinion.

There was a discussion on the actual existence of rayons. According to Bora, various degrees of rayons do exist, but they have to be searched for and developed into rayons; e.g., there are several co-existing micro-rayons in the Plains that do not combine into a meso-rayon. Gyula Krajko disputed this view, saying that such a situation developed at the dawn of capitalism (when the natural economy was discontinued). In the socialist society every economic district (micro-, and macro-rayons) already exists, and the only changes possible come about by the constant development, sub-division, or unification of these rayons. (Krajko here contradicts himself -- Enyedi.) Koszegi doubts the actual existence of rayons. The basis of rayonization should be the already-existing territorial work divisions, territorial relations, etc. Bora's statement that rayons exist and only have to be found is untrue. Rayons have to be formed in the future, and based on the analysis of the present.

The importance of the method of bordering had been emphasized by

Bora. He was echoed by Ferenc Koch and Gyorgy Markos. Enyedi suggested the mutual examination of the structure of the brutto productivity value and the inter-territorial product relations. He used this method when working on the branch (agricultural) districts. According to Gyula Krajko, this method is not good because complexity weakens the links between areas. No progress was achieved on this session, for methodological experience does not come about by working on hypothetical plans. Experience comes only by working on concrete rayon problems. In this field we have only introductory knowledge.

Several speakers (Koch, Markos, Enyedi) emphasized that in rayon research the investigations cannot be limited to narrowly interpreted production. Heretofore we have neglected the research of the main production factor, that of the manpower. This mistake must be corrected. The population data has to be investigated in its entirety and in its reproductive tendencies -- not only as manpower to rayons. Analysis of settlements must be also carried out.

"Appointment of rayons from above" was condemned by the meeting. (This method was used by the Planning Bureau in its rayon research, but only as a working hypothesis.) Gyorgy Markos believes that "building from below" and the investigation of large units from above must be done concurrently. According to Janos Kolta, only those investigations that start with the smallest area unit can expect to arrive at the truth about large areas (rayons).

3) The importance of the connection between rayonization and planning is recognized, but was not discussed. In fact, the new upsurge in rayonization work was started by the new demands of practical planning and is closely connected to the very effective support that planning has received lately. This thought was also expressed by Laszlo Koszegi. He emphasized the importance of rayon research in the first Hungarian projected planning (planning for the next 15-20 years). In this plan, area development and settlement rearrangement is also represented. This plan cannot be made on the present political subdivisions of the country; these existing sub-divisions will be changed by economic rayon research.

It is obvious that these rayonization works become reality only when the units of economic geography and of planning coincide (Koch, Markos). This means that the rayons must become political units (Kolta).

4) Gyorgy Markos dealt with the history of Hungarian rayon research. Temesi, Vidor and Kolta urged coordination among rayon researchers who work in difficult sub-fields. Janos Kolta suggested a committee to be set up to deal with this question.

The closing speech was delivered by Prof Sandor Rado. He emphasized the importance of the links between scientific rayon research and practice. These links are not yet found in many socialist countries; we are among those doing the first steps in this field. The practice of the Soviet Union is the best: the National Planning Bureau employs economic geographers to work on rayonization problems.